



PATRICK TESTIN STATE SENATOR

Op-Ed: *Striving for Balance*

The discussion of high capacity wells in Central Wisconsin has been emotionally charged, which at times has caused neighbors to look at each other as adversaries. I believe that the vast majority of people on both sides of the issue have good intentions, and that we cannot afford to let our differences define how we relate to one another. As your State Senator, I've listened to all sides of the debate, and worked to create a compromise that strikes a balance and offers certainty to both the farming community and to those residents concerned with water quality and quantity issues.

During the drought in 2012, there were incidents where wells failed, jeopardizing farmers' ability to water their crops, and in turn, jeopardizing the crops themselves. In these circumstances, farmers should be able to repair their well without undue delays caused by governmental permitting. Farmers need to be able to repair and replace their wells in order to make a living, and Senate Bill 76 enables them to do that. Water access is imperative to Wisconsin agriculture and all those jobs connected to it; these jobs don't just start and end on the farm. The secondary job market created by our farming community is the lifeblood of our region.

I voted for Senate Bill 76 to preserve those jobs, but I also took into account the concerns that I heard. I fought to insert an expanded, more comprehensive study area into the bill because Central Wisconsin residents deserve to know with certainty that their water supply will continue to be clean and available. Throughout the legislative process, Rep. Krug and I met with people from across the political spectrum and discussed how we could make positive changes to SB 76. The amendment that I offered targets the areas that have seen the greatest draw down for further study. Our amendment also includes language that will study Long Lake and Plainfield Lake, two of the most discussed water bodies when debating this bill.

This discussion will continue; the unique geology and geography of our area creates challenges for all of us who use water. Science should be our guide, and the expanded study area will ensure that we have more data so that we can make sound decisions in the future. The current compromise should offer certainty to both the farming community and to those residents who are concerned about water quality and quantity. By working together and listening to each other, we can protect our water supply and continue to grow and thrive in Central Wisconsin.